

## ANNAMITE CIVILIZATION

proper medium of expression. Fear of being discredited by their *am* productions made these writers chary of revealing their identity and the circumstances of their composition. Some poets won celebrity >nly a few verses written in characters, while the masterpiece

<*oan-Kieu* was long ignored simply because it was composed in vernacular and for the amusement of the author and his friends, poem was barely mentioned by the Court Annalist when he had the biography of the high mandarin who was its dilettante >r. Such inattention naturally resulted in a neglect of style, so the value of these works lies much more in the originality and sense of their writers' observations.

*ic-van-Tien* is the most popular work in Annamite literature.

- acteristically its author is unknown. The hero is a simple man of people whose sole ambition is to better his estate through the study of sophy. He must pass through a series of physical and moral ordeals is never vanquished by evil passions. His virtue eventually wins the royal crown and Heaven's mandate. Embodied in this poem three fundamental Annamite beliefs—filial piety, fidelity to the oror and his mandarins, and the devotion of pupil to teacher.

hero's disdain of wealth, the attribution of unhappiness to im-  
 derate desires, contentment with one's lot—  
 with virtue being  
 irded and vice punished—have made this poem  
 dear to every  
 tamite heart. *Kim-van-Rieu* > its rival in popular  
 affection, is not an  
 : but a lengthy novel both naturalistic and  
 licentious. For more  
 i a century it has served in Annam as the touchstone  
 of linguistic  
 ;ance. A strong Buddhistic strain underlies its  
 thought: our present

fortunes are but the expiation of faults in a former  
 existence. In all  
 Vnnamite literature there is a conspicuous absence  
 of epic virility  
 i to that of the *Chanson de Roland* and the  
*Niebelmgen Lied*.  
 'opular songs and legends allow free scope for the  
 Annamite love  
 he ironic and the marvellous. Every event of any  
 importance has its  
 md, which may be gross or tragic, but which has also  
 a naive charm.  
 ey are quite typical of the Annamite mind which basks  
 in a chaos of  
 «matural events, and loves gratuitous  
 complications. Genii abound,  
 asionaHy benevolent but usually ferocious, who  
 interfere intermin-  
 y in human affairs. These legends glorify craft,  
 ruse, and lies—  
 rtfaiing to circumvent brute force, be it exercised by  
 the Chinese or  
 2T\$. They needs must bow to it, but they can and  
 also do ridicule  
 Stupidity is the only serious fault. One may add that  
 the ladies play  
 teiar role in this type of tale. The Annamites have  
 also another side,